

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Jan. 19

History of MLK Day

By David Johnson
www.infoplease.com

It took 15 years to create the federal Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Congressman John Conyers first introduced legislation for a commemorative holiday four days after King was assassinated in 1968.

After the bill stalled, petitions containing six million names were submitted to Congress in support of the holiday's creation.

Conyers and Rep. Shirley Chisholm resubmitted King holiday legislation each subsequent legislative session. Public pressure for the holiday mounted dur-

ing the 1982 and 1983 civil rights marches in Washington.

Congress passed the holiday legislation in 1983, and President Ronald Reagan signed it into law.

A compromise moved the holiday from King's Jan. 15 birthday – which was considered too close to Christmas and New Year's Day – to the third Monday in January.

A number of states resisted celebrating the holiday. Some opponents contended that the entire civil rights movement should be honored rather than one individual, however instrumental.

For more information visit www.infoplease.com/spot/mlkhistory1.html.



courtesy

In his own words:

Selections from the speeches and writings of Martin Luther King Jr.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (*Strength to Love*, 1963)

"Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted." (*Strength to Love*, 1963)

"If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live." (Speech in Detroit, Mich., June 23, 1963)

"It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important." (*Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 13, 1962)

"The curse of poverty has no justification in our age. It is socially as cruel and blind as the practice of cannibalism at the dawn of civilization." (*Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 1967)

sources: www.mlkonline.com, www.quotationspage.com

MLK resources on the Web

The King Center for Nonviolent Social Change

www.thekingcenter.org

Founded by Coretta Scott King, The King Center's mission statement describes the center as "the living memorial and institutional guardian of Dr. King's legacy."

The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project

www.stanford.edu/group/King

The project's Web site describes itself as "a major research effort to assemble and disseminate historical information concerning Martin Luther King Jr."

MLK Online

www.mlkonline.com

Begun as a school project by a high school sophomore, MLK Online offers a wealth of King-related information, including complete texts of many speeches, sound, photo and video clips and a collection of quotes.

Nobel Peace Prize 1964

www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1964/

In addition to a brief biography, the Nobel site also includes the text of King's 1964 Nobel lecture and the presentation speech given by Gunnar Jahn, then-chairman of the Nobel Committee.

Read the Jan. 27 edition of The Citizen for coverage of Martin Luther King Jr. Day events in the 6th Area Support Group.